

Good afternoon. My name is Zygmunt Pietrzak. I am Principal of the Polish Language School in New Britain, Connecticut. I am here today in support of House Bill 5820, which would provide high school credits to students who complete language courses in private schools.

The Polish Language School was started in New Britain in 1960, with its first enrollment of 100 students. Over the next decade, the school's enrollment doubled. I became Principal in 1985 when the school had grown to 300 students. Since then, the student population has more than doubled once again to 680 students, and has become a member of a U.S. organization of Polish Language Schools. The teaching staff at Polish Language School is composed of native Polish speakers who graduated from colleges and universities in Poland. These teachers typically have several years of teaching experience at the elementary and high school levels. Students of Polish Language School complete eight years of weekly education in Polish language, history, culture, and geography before graduation. This educational program is consistent with recommendations of the Polish Teachers Association in America, which is sponsored by the Polish-American Congress.

Awarding graduates of Polish Language School with high school credits upon completion of their studies will provide them with an increased sense of accomplishment. It will also allow them to pursue more advanced education in Polish or other languages at the high school level. In doing so, it may help develop more culturally competent individuals, which are essential in today's global society.

I strongly encourage you to vote in support of this bill. Thank you.